

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCY
QUESTIONS/ANSWERS FOR
REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS #DCRL-2014-U-0009
FY 2014 Family Preservation through Legal Aid

The District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) received a series of questions from Applicants interested in submitting proposals for the referenced grant. Please keep this information in mind when developing your proposals. We look forward to receiving your applications by **Tuesday, September 17, 2013; 2pm.**

Question #1: The Family Preservation Project (FPP) description (page 2) states that the applicants “must demonstrate capacity to have the project fully functioning within forty-five (45) days following notification of the grant award.” Section II: Awards Information (page 6) provides that applicants “must be prepared to sign the Grant Agreement within thirty (30) days of the award.” Are we correct to understand that there is in fact a two-step process, the first allowing the selected applicant up to thirty (30) days to sign the Agreement, and the second allowing an additional forty-five (45) days once the Grantee is notified of the actual grant award?

Answer #1: Upon notification of award, the grantee will have up to 45 days to assure capacity to begin services. Within the 45 day period, the grantee will be expected to sign the grant agreement. The grantee does not have up to 30 days to sign the agreement – CFSA has up to 30 days from date of notification to issue the grant agreement.

Question #2: Would a Grantee’s FPP that has the capacity and ability to assist eligible clients referred by CFSA be considered “fully functioning” (as stated on page 2), even if the Grantee may still be in the process of hiring or training project staff?

Answer #2: Yes, fully functioning is considered to mean having the capacity and ability to assist eligible clients at the time of application for grant funds.

Question #3: Section III: Eligibility Requirements (page 13) states that “[a]ll individuals to be served under the FPP are residents of the District of Columbia.” Could a Grantee, under rare and appropriate circumstances, use FPP funds to assist a non-DC resident parent with an issue involving a child who is a resident of the District and whose legal issue presents in the District? Also, in determining how to allocate its resources, may the Grantee impose income considerations and prioritize clients based upon a number of factors including income and/or financial need?

Answer #3: Yes, while it is not a norm, it is a possibility. And yes to the second question.

Question #4: Section VI: General Provisions (page 18-19) outline insurance requirements for the Grantee. Among other things, it requires that the Grantee certify that it has Professional Liability Insurance (Errors & Omissions) and Legal Malpractice Insurance with limits of \$1,000,000 per occurrence for each wrongful act and \$3,000,000 annual aggregate. Would CFSA consider an organization which has limits of \$250,000 per occurrence and \$500,000 annual aggregate, and could explain to CFSA why it believes these limits are sufficient under the circumstances?

Answer #4: The limits of insurance are those set forth by the District of Columbia Government and are used as basic commercial insurance standards. In the event the Grantee is involved in any liability arising from the services provided, DC Government will not defend or be financially responsible to the Grantee.

Question #5: Section VII: Program Scope (page 23) states that Grantee “shall ensure all employees, volunteers, consultants and subcontractors have been cleared through the Child Protection Registry and the Police Department of the jurisdictions(s) in which the staff member or volunteer resided during the five years prior to employment under this grant, as well as cleared through the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department....” Interpreted literally, this requirement places a significant burden on large organizations that utilize significant staff and volunteer resources. Could the Grantee limit the background check requirement to attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and volunteers who have direct contact with FPP clients?

Answer #5: Yes, this requirement applies to those individuals who have direct contact with FPP clients.

Question #6: Page 11 – No electronic submissions will be accepted. For environmental purposes, kindly modify and permit electronic submittals, in lieu of hard copies.

Answer #6: At this time, electronic submissions are not accepted.

Question #7: Kindly acknowledge that an applicant will be given a time stamped receipt upon submission of their application/proposal.

Answer #7: All applications are time stamped when received onsite.

Question #8: Since the submission location is on the 2nd floor, will CFSA ensure prompt access to this location for delivery of proposals. Otherwise, will there be a designated drop-off in the lobby and clearly delineated.

Answer #8: Applicants are advised to plan to deliver their submission either the day before by mail or at any time before the 2pm deadline on Tuesday, September 17. Applicants will be met at the Security Desk next to the Clinic, if they choose to deliver their submission.

Question #9: Section III: Eligibility Information – restricts bidders to legal aid clinics or law firms. This is very restrictive. Solo practitioners, entrepreneurs, inclusive of attorneys with the requisite skills required by the RFA should not be excluded. Therefore, kindly permit the eligible bidders to include any entrepreneurial firm with attorneys with the skills to perform the scope of work listed in the RFA.

Answer #9: It can allow solo practitioners, but it shouldn't include CCAN attorneys or attorneys that currently have caseloads or could potentially have caseloads, as this would be counterintuitive to how we envisioned the program working.

Question #10: Applicant Responsibility and Scope of Work – p. 21 last paragraph. Are referrals limited to a pro-bono clinic or merely to an attorney capable of ensuring the “best interests” of the child are being met?

Answer #10: Referrals are limited to entities that can perform all the functions that are needed, which would include the social work aspect of the scope of the work.

Question #11: Staff Requirements – if an applicant is Top Secret Cleared by the Department of Defense, will this clearance suffice in lieu of those listed on page 23.

Answer #11: No, clearances outlined in the RFA are required.

Question #12: Is the target population wards of DC, those who are at risk of becoming wards, or both?

Answer #12: This would be for families and children that are at risk of coming into CFSA's care. The definition of “wards” in child welfare are children already under the care and custody of CFSA.

Question #13: The NOFA states that legal clinics and law firms “meeting eligibility criteria” can apply. Is there a list of what the eligibility criteria is? Also, is a legal services organization eligible?

Answer #13: As stated in the RFA, Applications will be accepted only from legal aid clinics or law firms which have demonstrated abilities to meet the needs identified in this RFA, and who are able to commit to implementing the program measures over the grant period.

Question #14: What types of legal services are envisioned for this grant; specifically, how does CFSA want parents and caregivers to be represented in this context and under what circumstances?

Answer #14: The type of legal services envisioned for this grant would be to represent the party (exclusive of abuse and/or neglect) to prevent the potential of the child coming into the care of CFSA, based upon abuse and/or neglect allegations.

Question #15: As I understand it the NOFA calls for applicants who can provide legal services to wards of CFSA and children at risk of entering the abuse and neglect system. According to the constituent, the NOFA says that only “legal clinics and law firms” meeting eligibility criteria can apply. Legal clinic is not defined; there are no eligibility criteria in either the NOFA or the RFA.

Answer #15: As stated in the RFA, applications will be accepted only from legal aid clinics or law firms which have demonstrated abilities to meet the needs identified in this RFA, and who are able to commit to implementing the program measures over the grant period. Successful applicants shall demonstrate experience with the target population including experience with child welfare cases and community outreach and advocacy.

Question #16: [T]he types of legal and social services to be provided also are not defined.

Answer #16: As stated in the RFA, the FPP aims to prevent unnecessary removals and foster care placements, to minimize the emotional trauma caused by removal, to keep more children with their families when those families are capable of caring for them, and to allow the District’s foster care system to focus its resources on children who truly need its protection. The program shall serve to support families who are at risk of having a child removed from the home for which some targeted civil legal intervention is needed. Applicants are expected to propose the type of services they will provide.